

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 /029 W
-----113244 150430Z /13

R 150235Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1535
INS WASHDC
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 7705

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM BEING REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO.
SENT ACTION BANGKOK, INFO VIENTIANE ON(O P 131400Z MAR 78)
FROM AMCONSUL UDORN

QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 0062

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF TH LA
SUBJECT: HMONG INFLUX INTO NONG KHAI PROVINCE

REF: UDORN 0059 AND PREVIOUS

1. CURRENT STATE OF PLAY REGARDING HMONG INFLUX INTO NONG
KHAI PROVINCE, BASED ON SERIES OF INTERVIEWS MARCH
12 AND 13, WITH HMONG LEADER, UNHCR NORTHEAST
REP, AND WEEKEND VISITORS TO PHON PHISAI AND BUNG KAN
DISTRICTS, APPEARS TO BE AS FOLLOWS:

2. NEW HMONG ARRIVALS - AVOIDING BOTH LPDR SECURITY
PATROLS AND RTG POLICE, HMONG REFUGEES CONTINUE TO SLIP
ACROSS MEKONG RIVER, MAINLY AT NIGHT, IN SMALL GROUPS OF
25-30 TO ENTER PHON PHISAI AND BUNG KAN DISTRICTS.

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OUR SOURCES STATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 120 HMONG ENTERED
TWO DISTRICTS DURING WEEKEND. THEY ADD THAT AN ESTIMATED
ONE TO THREE THOUSAND HMONG REFUGEES FROM PHU BIA AREA
ARE NOW HIDING IN FOOTHILLS ACROSS FROM PHON PHISAI AND
BUNG KAN, WITH ANOTHER SEVERAL THOUSAND REPORTEDLY ON WAY
TO JOIN THEM, LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN REFUGE
IN THAILAND.

3. MOST OF HMONG WHO MAKE IT TO THAI SIDE OF BORDER
CLEARLY SHOW EFFECTS OF THEIR HAZARDOUS 10-12 DAY TREK
FROM MOUNTAINS SOUTHWEST OF PLAIN OF JARS. THEIR CLOTHES
ARE REDUCED TO RAGS AND THEY LOOK PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTED.
SOME, PARTICULARLY SMALL CHILDREN AND BABIES, ARE SUFFERING
FROM MALNUTRITION OR FEVER. MANY HMONG ARE BAREFOOT AND
DISPLAY LARGE CUTS ON THEIR FEET AND LEGS.
GUNSHOT WOUNDS SEEM TO BE RARE.

4. HMONG LEADERS FROM ONE OF FIRST VILLAGES TO
FALL TO JOINT LPDR/SRV MILITARY CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN
PHU BIA AREA FEBRUARY 10, REPORT THEIR PEOPLE SUFFERED
RELATIVELY SLIGHT CASULTIES, CONTRARY TO IMPRESSIONS
WE RECEIVED FROM EARLIER REPORTS. ACCORDING TO THEIR
STATEMENTS, ADDITIONAL HMONG LOSSES INCURRED THROUGH
FIREFIGHTS WITH LPDR BORDER PATROLS AT MEKONG RIVER
AND DROWNINGS WHILE FORDING RIVER, ARE AVERAGING ABOUT
5-10 PERCENT OF TOTAL WHO REACH THAILAND.

5. RTG EXCLUSION EFFORT - PHON PHISAI AND BUNG KAN
DISTRICT POLICE UNITS, WHICH HAVE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
FOR DISCOURAGING ENTRY OF NEW REFUGEES, HAVE NEITHER
MANPOWER NOR EQUIPMENT TO EFFECTIVELY SURVEIL ESTIMATED
TOTAL OF 135 KILOMETERS OF MEKONG RIVER BORDER TWO DISTRICTS
SHARE WITH LAOS. IN ADDITION, LEADERS OF HMONG REFUGEE BANDS
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APPEAR TO HAVE MET WITH CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN ENLISTING,
THROUGH BRIBES, COOPERATION OF THAI VILLAGERS, AND, ONE
SUSPECTS, ALSO POSSIBLY A FEW POLICEMEN, TO FIND A SECURE
WAY ACROSS RIVER INTO THAILAND.

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 /029 W
-----113289 150431Z /13

R 150235Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1536
INS WASHDC
USMISSION GENEVA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BANGKOK 7705

6. RESULT IS THAT, DESPITE OCCASIONAL STRENUOUS POLICE EFFORTS TO BLOCK HMONGS FROM CROSSING RIVER, SMALL BUT STEADY STREAM OF NEW HMONG REFUGEES IS CONTINUING TO REACH SAFETY OF THAI SIDE OF BORDER. ONCE HAVING REACHED THAI SOIL REFUGEES, WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, ARE BEING ACCEPTED FOR PROCESSING BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HMONG REFUGEE PRESIDENT IN NONG KHAI CAMP TOLD CONSUL FINNEY MARCH 12 THAT HE KNEW OF ONLY THREE HMONG REFUGEES, SINCE CURRENT INFLUX BEGAN MARCH 1, WHO HAVE BEEN SENT BACK TO LAOS AFTER HAVING CROSSED RIVER INTO THAILAND.

7. UNHCR NORTHEAST REP EXPRESSES CONCERN - NONETHELESS, UNHCR NORTHEAST REP EXPRESSED HIS SERIOUS CONCERN TO CONSUL MARCH 13 OVER WHAT HE VIEWS AS UNDULY AGGRESSIVE BORDER DENIAL EFFORTS BY BUNG KAN DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF MAJOR MANOP JITTAKASEM. (REFTEL, PARA 2) UNHCR REP STATED THAT ACTIONS OF MAJOR MANOP, WHO SUPPOSEDLY HAS DEVELOPED STRONG DISTASTE FOR HMONG REFUGEES ARISING OUT OF DISAGREEMENTS WITH HMONG ARRIVALS IN JANUARY, COULD LEAD TO LPDR INTERCEPTIONS OF HMONG RIVER CROSSINGS WITH TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES FOR REFUGEES.

8. HMONG REFUGEE CHIEF
IN NONG KHAI CAMP, AS WELL AS NEW ARRIVAL LEADERS, HAVE
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ALSO TOLD CONSULATE REPRESENTATIVEY DURING PAST TWO DAYS OF THEIR CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY OF HMONG REFUGEES ON LAO SIDE OF MEKONG LOOKING FOR CHANCE TO ENTER THAILAND. HMONG SPOKESMEN WOULD LIKE UNHCR TO REQUEST RTG TO CEASE BORDER ENTRY DENIAL OPERATIONS IN PHON PHISAI AND BUNG KAN WND PERMIT ALL HMONG FLEEING PHU BIA SITUATION TO ENTER THAILAND UNIMPEDED.

9. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT UNHCR REP'S CONCERN FOR SECURITY OF HMONG REFUGEES ACROSS MEKONG RIVER IS WELL-FOUNDED. WHILE SMALL GROUPS OF HMONG ARE SUCCESSFULLY LANDING IN NONG KHAI PROVINCE, AVAILABLE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT MUCH LARGER NUMBERS ARE BEING HELD UP AT BORDER'S EDGE BY RTG EXCLUSIONARY POLICY, HOWEVER INEPTLY IMPELEMENTED. AS NUMBERS OF THESE REFUGEES CONTINUE TO BUILD UP, RISK OF LARGE-SCALE CONFRONTATION WITH LPDR SECURITY FORCES THAT COULD DEVASTATE HMONG INCREASES.

10. UNHCR REP STATES THAT UNHCR/THAILAND DIRECTOR GOODYEAR IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART BANGKOK MARCH 15, IN COMPANY OF SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS, TO TOUR NORTHEAST REFUGEE CAMPS. WE RECOMMEND EMBASSY SUGGEST TO GOODYEAR THAT AFTER HE HAS HAD OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW HMONG REFUGEE SITUATION IN NONG KHAI HIMSELF, HE CONSIDER USEFULNESS OF ASKING THAIS TO RELAX EXCLUSIONARY POLICY TO PERMIT LARGE INFLUX OF HMONG AT PHON PHISAI AND BUNG KAN. WITHOUT OVERDRAMATIZING PLIGHT OF THIS GROUP OF HMONG, CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR ATTEMPTED FLIGHT TO THAILAND WOULD SEEM TO ENTITLE THEM TO SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATION. FINNEY
UNQUOTE:
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCE, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO07705
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780114-0615
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780368/aaaacffi.tel
Line Count: 184
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 17fb6dc7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 UDORN 59
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3330206
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HMONG INFLUX INTO NONG KHAI PROVINCE
TAGS: SREF, TH, LA, (HMONG)
To: STATE INS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/17fb6dc7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014